

19 March 1979

ORAL NATO
LORENZEN, Ursel

SPIES:

A Model Secretary

At NATO headquarters in Brussels, Ursel Lorenzen was a popular secretary. She was attractive, genial, intelligent—and was cleared to handle classified military documents. Her colleagues threw a party for her on her 40th birthday, but as she basked in their champagne toasts and their chorus of "For She's a Jolly Good Fellow," Lorenzen was celebrating a lot more than just her birthday. That day she had received her orders from East Berlin: after twelve chilling years as a Communist spy, Ursel Lorenzen was about to come in from the cold.

Communist agents slipped her into East Germany last week and officials there quickly made her a prime-time personality. In a fifteen-minute television appearance, Lorenzen told about dozens of political, military and intelligence secrets she had stolen—including contingency plans for nuclear warfare and details of a top-secret NATO exercise that had just taken place the day before. "I was involved each year in planning all NATO exercises," she told the TV audience. "I was in the center of crisis management."

Military Responses: Lorenzen primarily passed along hypothetical military responses by the West to threatened atomic assaults. NATO sources felt the East Germans might find her contributions useful. Fumed one intelligence officer: "It's like sitting down to play chess with an opponent who can read your mind." But no one knew precisely how much NATO military security had been compromised by Lorenzen's spying.

According to Western intelligence sources, Lorenzen, a native of Hamburg, joined the NATO staff in Paris thirteen years ago and fell in love with an officer there. When the romance broke up, according to one theory, Lorenzen became emotionally distraught—and an easy prey for Communist recruiting agents. "That's when the East got their claws into her," one source said. "It was a long shot but the investment paid off." Before long, Lorenzen was ripping off secrets from work the way other people take home paper clips.

Roundup: After Lorenzen went public on East German television, West German Federal Attorney General Kurt

Rebmann announced a spy roundup of his own. At least ten East German agents had been captured in recent weeks, he said, and another 50 individuals were "under investigation." "The East's espionage activities have been seriously disrupted," Rebmann claimed. But most NATO officials thought that Rebmann was probably exaggerating.

Lorenzen clearly had stolen the show. During her television appearance in East Germany, she spoke gravely about NATO's increasing reliance on nuclear weaponry and—as she saw it—the anti-Communist anxieties in the West. "I know from my own observations," Lorenzen said "that not a single exercise takes place without the use of atomic weapons." But that turned out to be only a preview. Lorenzen promised her audience that she would be back again soon—with another episode of "I Spy."

—FRED BRUNING with PAUL MARTIN in Bonn